



*Snow geese readily feed on waste grain in rice fields near the Sutter Buttes.*

## Attracting Wildlife to Your Farm

**W**hat farmer or rancher doesn't treasure the sight of a covey of quail dashing across the road, or a red-tailed hawk cruising over a field, or a flight of mallards feeding in flooded stubble?

California farmers enjoy wildlife and for decades have supported wildlife on their land. Some do it without special effort or planning: Harvested grain fields naturally attract waterfowl and vegetation bordering fields provides cover for pheasants and other wildlife species. Others work at attracting wildlife by planting fallowed fields, establishing hedgerows or windbreaks, flooding harvested grain fields, or creating seasonal brood ponds.

Whether you cultivate rice, small grains, vegetable crops, fruit, or other crops, your farmlands can play a very important role in the future of California's wildlife. Often just a slight adjustment in your farming practices can make a big difference.

## Valley Farmlands Vital to Wildlife

**T**he 400-mile long Central Valley stretches from Red Bluff to Bakersfield, encompassing the Sacramento and San

Joaquin valleys. A century ago the Central Valley contained vast permanent and seasonal wetlands that served as a magnet for millions of waterfowl navigating the Pacific Flyway. Huge flocks of wintering ducks, geese, and swans fattened up on rich food sources provided by Central Valley wetlands. Substantial numbers of water-associated birds lived there year-round and used the marshes for breeding and to rear their young.

Today most of these wetlands have been inundated by reservoirs, altered to convey flood waters, drained and converted to agriculture, or lost to urban expansion. Even though migratory waterfowl numbers have decreased as the wetland habitat has declined, aggressive land management practices on refuges, duck hunting clubs, and some farms and ranches still provide enough food, cover, and water to support about 60 percent of the Pacific Flyway's waterfowl. In fact in the past three years 42,000 acres of wetlands have been added on Central Valley agricultural lands.

These wetlands, irrigated fields, adjacent uplands, and riparian areas are vital to waterfowl and also support a wide variety of other wildlife species seasonally and throughout the year.

### How to Attract Wildlife to Your Farm

#### Simple practices with fast results

- Leave grain or corn stubble on fields after harvest.
- Leave a small portion of your crop unharvested.
- Plant wildlife food plots.
- Winter-flood crop stubble.
- Clear just one side of water ditches each year.

#### More intensive practice with longer-lasting results

- Plant a cover crop on fallowed fields.
- Plant perennial vegetation on levees, road corridors, field borders, or other non-farmed areas.
- Provide shallow, wet areas for pheasant and duck broods during spring and summer.
- Build a tailwater return system.
- Plant a shelterbelt.